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ABSTRACT

A two-part study was conducted to investigate the underrepresentation of blacks in the medical and nursing professions. Through a literature search it was found that due to the low number of minority applicants medical schools have created positions for minority recruiters who serve as role models, empathize with black student concerns, and help dispel distrust of white-dominated medical institutions; special preparatory and remedial programs are needed by disadvantaged students; and blacks need financial aid for tuition, fees, and books. For the second part of the study, which examined the nursing professions, students were sent questionnaires and chairpersons were interviewed at twenty-six nursing schools representing various regions and degree programs. The following conclusions were reached on black recruitment, admission, and retention in nursing schools: (1) blacks are most likely to enroll in schools with associate degree programs, low tuition rates, and located in their own neighborhoods; (2) meeting with high school counselors and students is the most successful recruitment practice; (3) special admission criteria and admission committees with black members do not affect the size of black enrollment; (4) preadmission programs for remedial instruction increase the number of black applicants, but have little effect on student retention and state board passage rates; and (5) schools with flexible curriculum and class scheduling had a high retention of black students as did schools with extensive funding programs. (EIG)

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RECRUITMENT STRATEGIES IN THE HEALTH PROFESSIONS

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The underrepresentation of minorities, especially blacks, in the health professions has become of increasing concern to educators, professional associations, policy makers, and health consumer groups. Studies have documented that although blacks comprise 12 percent of the American population, they only comprise 2.2 percent of the physician and 3 percent of the nurse labor force (Evans and Jackson, 1976:197). Various and numerous attempts have been made to recruit, retain, and graduate blacks from medical colleges and schools of nursing. This paper first explores some of the strategies suggested in the literature for increasing black representation in the medical profession. Second, the study investigates methods schools of nursing have used to recruit and retain black student nurses and evaluates how successful these methods have been. This report is the first emanating from a three year federally funded project concerned with the sparcity of black nurses.

Strategies for Black Recruitment in the Medical Profession

In recognition of black underrepresentation in the medical profession, the American Association of Medical Colleges' Task Force set 12 percent as the 1975-1976 goal for minority admissions to medical colleges (Curtis, 1975:563). The 1975-1976 statistics, however, show that this goal was not attained. In that academic year, the percentage of black admissions was 5.9 percent, and the total percentage of minority medical students was 6.2 (Gordon and Dubé, 1976:145-146; Alexis, 1977:14).

Since minorities only comprised 7.2 percent of the 1975-1976 total medical school applicant pool, many concerned individuals stress the need for increased recruitment efforts (Gordon and Dubé, 1976:144). A number of medical colleges have created positions for managing recruitment and several have hired black men and women to direct recruitment efforts. It is believed that these minority recruiters can: serve as role models, emphathize with black student concerns, and help dispel distrust of white-dominated medical institutions (Evans and Jackson, 1976). Gaines (1975) has stressed the importance of maintaining communication with minority applicants throughout the entire admission process from initial inquiry to final decision.

Others who are concerned with minority enrollment stress the need for preparatory and remedial programs to help students from disadvantaged backgrounds (Alexis, 1977:14). These writers emphasize that faculty members must realize that the Medical College Admission Test often has no predictive value as to students' academic success (e.g., Evans and Jackson, 1976). Geertsma (1977) has shown that faculty at the University of Rochester who have participated in a special tutorial program have been instrumental in helping black students erase doubts about: their acceptance by students and faculty, and their self-worth, progress, and achievement.

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Applewhite (1971) and Robinson (1972) have noted that blacks need monetary aid for tuition, fees, and books. They place special emphasis on dormitory life to enable blacks to become part of the cultural and social life of the campus.

Methods of Recruitment and Retention in the Nursing Profession

Various and numerous attempts have been made to recruit, retain, and graduate blacks from schools of nursing. The following section investigates the recruitment and retention strategies utilized by nursing schools and evaluates how successful the efforts have been.

Study Design.

The Program of Health Services Delivery, Bureau of Governmental Research, University of Maryland, has received a three year research grant (NU 00570-01) from the Division of Nursing, U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare to study the "Nursing Profession and Black Nurses." The data collection stage of the study began in 1977 when questionnaires were self-administered by students in twenty-six nursing educational programs in each region of the United States. The schools of nursing selected for study represented the associate, diploma and baccalaureate degree programs within each region. The data for this study were obtained from personal interviews conducted with the chairperson of each program.

An overview of Table I and the school characteristics indicates that blacks were most likely to enroll in schools with associate degree programs, with low tuition rates, and located in low socio-economic, black neighborhoods. Religious schools were successful in enrolling large numbers of minority students as were publicly funded institutions.

Recruitment Practices

The chairpersons were asked if their programs engaged in ten types of recruitment practices. The most frequently used methods were: 1) faculty or students speaking to high school students interested in nursing; 2) recruiters speaking in schools with large black populations; 3) recruiters holding conferences with high school guidance counselors; 4) black recruiters going into black areas; 5) inviting students to visit the school; and 6) utilizing media advertisments. Of these methods, meeting with high school counselors and students were thought to be most successful. The least used practices were: 1) placing ads in minority group media; 2) advertising in college handbooks; 3) sending brochures to minority groups; and 4) participating in the National Student Nurse Association's Breakthrough project.

As can be seen in Table II, those schools with high black enrollments did not necessarily expend much effort in recruitment activities. Yet, it can be seen that those schools which utilized extensive recruitment measures did have moderate to high black student populations. It is also interesting to note that the retention rates are inversely related to recruitment efforts. That is, those schools which most actively sought black students were not successful in retaining them. However, it does appear that those students who remain in high recruitment schools are most successful in passing state board examinations.

Admission Criteria

As can be seen in Table II, admission criteria did not affect the size of the enrollment of the black students. Schools which rejected a large percentage of applicants, required a grade point average of 2.5 or better, utilized standardized college board exams, or demanded a large number of subject prerequisites for admission had as large black enrollments as schools with low and flexible admission criteria. Those schools with maximum standards did have high black retention and state board passage rates. However, those with only moderate requirements also displayed high rates of black retention and passage.

Over half of the schools utilized admission committees with black members or had established special standards to admit more black students. These efforts appear to have no effect on the size of black enrollment or on the dropout or passage rates.

Several schools had established pre-admission programs to give remedial assistance to students with deficient learning skills. While half of the schools with high black enrollments had preadmission programs, they reported low retention and state board passage rates. A few chairpersons indicated, however, that establishing preadmission programs did help in favorably adjusting the racial image of their schools. Those with predominantly white student populations were able to use these programs to demonstrate to blacks that the school was genuinely interested in helping them become nurses. Once such an image was portrayed, the number of black applicants increased. With this increase, came a larger number of educationally prepared and highly motivated applicants.

Curriculum and Retention

As can be seen in Table II, retention criteria had no relationship with either size of black enrollment or black retention rates. However, those schools with moderate to high retention standards did show significantly higher rates of students passing state board examinations than did schools with low and flexible criteria. The schools which developed flexibility in curriculum and class scheduling had high percentages of black students remain in school and pass state board exams.

Most schools claimed to have some methods to help students improve grade point averages. The schools which had established formal retention programs, however, were no more successful in graduating black registered nurses than were schools with informal programs and limited faculty participation. The schools granting the most extensive types of funding had the highest rates of black retention and state board examination passage.

Conclusion

The findings of this study are discouraging for those expending funds and efforts on recruitment, admission, and retention programs. The data show that extensive recruitment efforts, preadmission programs, and special admission standards had no effect on the size of black enrollments. Moreover, these efforts and formal retention programs did not increase the rates of black retention or passage of state board examinations.

The findings did indicate, however, that benefits accrue when funds and curriculum are utilized to assist students already enrolled in the schools. Flexible course requirements and class schedules, and extensive financial aid programs did

enable large numbers of black students to remain in school, and these students were successful in passing state board examinations. Black students are most likely to enroll in schools where they feel welcome and are most likely to succeed in environments where their needs are recognized and their efforts are supported.

Chairpersons of nursing schools acknowledge that integrating student populations is a difficult task. High school counseling is poor and differences in cultural and educational backgrounds must be recognized. They noted that subtle forms of discrimination still exist in evaluating performance through traditional measures and give rise to racial antagonisims.

In addition, directors stated that black students must be familiarized with university settings and need counseling to be successful. An effort must be made to enroll qualified and motivated individuals for success is an important element in breaking the cultural expectiations of failure. Chairpersons were emphatic in stressing the need to keep communication lines open to detect and eliminate problems which may arise. Many feel that minority counselors and faculty are essential to this task.

Indeed, most recommendations for successful integration concern faculty. Chairpersons stress that teachers must forget their fears about lowering standards and be willing to take risks, devote time, and become committed to sustaining interest in opening opportunities in the health professions for minorities.

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TABLE I

NUMBER OF SCHOOLS, PERCENTAGE OF BLACK STUDENTS, AND REGION

Educational Program	Atlantic		East South Central		West South Central		East North Central		West North Central		West	
	# of Sch.	% Black	# of Sch.	% Black	# of Sch.	% Black	# of Sch.	% Black	# of Sch.	% Black	# of Sch.	% Black
Assoc.	1	33	2	12 10	1	14	3	46 31 66	1	40	3	6 26 70
Diploma	1	18	1	16	1	14	1	3	1	40	1	13
Bacc.	1	6	2	12 17	1	3	1	9	1	18	3	18 6 10

TABLE II

RECRUITMENT, ADMISSION, CURRICULUM, RETENTION,
AND BLACK ENROLLMENT, RETENTION, AND RATE OF PASSAGE
(Column Percentages)

	Black Enrollment			Black Retention			Black Passage			
	Low (10% or less) (N=9)	Mod (11-30%) (N=11)	High (over 30%) (N=6)	Low (75% or less) (N=6)	Mod (76-89%) (N=7)	High (90% or over) (N=7)	Low (less 80%) (N=7)	Mod (80-89%) (N=3)	Mod Hi (90-94%) (N=6)	High (95% over) (N=8)
RECRUITMENT EFFORTS										
Limited	67.7	45.5	66.7	50.0	57.2	85.7	55.6	66.7	83.3	37.5
Moderate	33.3	45.5	0	16.7	42.9	14.3	33.3	33.3	0	50
Extensive	0	9.1	33.3	33.4	0	0	11.1	0	16.7	12.5
ADMISSION CRITERIA										
Minimum	33.3	9.1	20	33.3	28.6	0	12.5	33.3	33.3	12.5
Moderate	33.3	54.5	40	50	14.3	71.4	50	0	66.7	37.5
Maximum	33.3	36.4	40	16.7	57.1	28.6	37.5	66.7	0	50
PERCENTAGE OF APPLICANTS NOT ACCEPTED										
10-30%	22.2	40	33.3	33.3	0	33.3	12.5	33.3	33.3	12.5
31-49%	22.2	10	33.3	33.3	42.9	0	50	0	66.7	37.5
50% over	55.6	50	33.3	33.3	57.1	66.7	37.5	66.7	0	50

TABLE II (Cont.)

	Black Enrollment			Black Retention			Black Passage			
	Low (10% or less) (N=9)	Mod (11-30%) (N=11)	High (over 30%) (N=6)	Low (75% or less) (N=6)	Mod (76-89%) (N=7)	High (90%or over) (N=7)	Low (less 80%) (N=7)	Mod (80-89%) (N=3)	Mod Hi (90-94%) (N=6)	High (95% over) (N=8)
SPECIAL SELECTION FOR BLACKS										
No	77.8	63.6	83.3	83.3	57.1	71.4	66.7	66.7	83.3	75
Adm.Comm.	0	9.1	16.7	16.7	0	14.3	11.1	0	16.7	0
Special Standard	22.2	27.3	0	0	42.9	14.3	22.2	33.3	0	25
PREADMISSION PROGRAM										
No	44.4	72.7	50	50	71.4	85.7	44.4		50	62.5
Yes	55.5	27.3	50	50	28.6	14.3	55.5	0	50	38.5
RETENTION CRITERIA										
Low, flexible	33.3	18.2	33.3	14.3	28.6	33.3	44.4	33.3	0	25
Moderate, High	67.7	81.8	67.7	85.7	71.4	67.7	55.6	67.7	100	75
SCHEDULE FLEXIBILITY										
Low	22.2	45.5	16.7	50	28.6	28.6	22.2	33.3	16.7	37.5
Moderate	22.2	18.2	50	33.4	0	14.3	55.5	33.3	8	25
High	55.5	36.4	33.3	16.7	71.5	57.1	22.2	33.3	83.3	37.5
RETENTION PROGRAMS										
No	44.4	45.5	33.3	16.7	57.2	71.4	22.2	100	66.6	25
Informal	33.3	18.2	33.3	66.7	14.3	14.3	44.4	0	33.3	12.5
Formal	22.2	36.4	33.3	16.7	28.6	14.3	33.3	0	0	62.5
PERCENTAGE OF MINORITY STUDENTS RECEIVE FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE										
10-30%	12.5	22.2	40	20	28.6	16.7	42.9	33.3	0	12.5
31-50%	37.5	0	0	20	0	0	28.6	0	0	12.5
over 50%	50	77.8	60	60	71.4	83.3	28.6	66.4	100	75